

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1337

By Todd

A RESOLUTION relative to a new nursing, natural sciences, and biotechnology facility at Southwest Tennessee Community College.

WHEREAS, in response to the greater Memphis community's need to sustain an educated workforce and provide well-paying careers for its citizens, Southwest Tennessee Community College has embarked upon a most worthy project to expand its nursing program and its training programs in biotechnology and bioengineering technology; and

WHEREAS, in fact, the Southwest Foundation is currently in the process of garnering individual, corporate, foundation, and organizational support to fund a significant portion of the \$16.75 million total cost of building a new 74,000 square foot nursing, natural sciences, and biotechnology facility to be located in the Central Medical District; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the Assissi Foundation's planning grant gift, Southwest has received significant pledges or cash gifts from Medtronic Sofamor Danek, area hospitals, the Plough Foundation, the Hyde Family Foundations, the Briggs Foundation, an anonymous donor, and a conglomeration of concerned individuals, organizations, and corporations; and

WHEREAS, Southwest has also secured over \$600,000 in federal appropriations in support of the facility, and total financial commitments to date total \$4.712 million or 28% of the total cost of the project; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Board of Regents has approved the Southwest project and placed it on the 2008-2009 capital outlay list; it is the only project on the list that has met fundraising criteria to be eligible for state matching funds; and

WHEREAS, despite the excellent planning and fundraising efforts of the Southwest Foundation and the great generosity and vision of its donors, the construction of the nursing,

natural sciences, and biotechnology facility will certainly be delayed due to sluggish state revenue collections and corresponding state budget reductions in the coming fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, while recognizing these economic realities, this General Assembly remains fully committed to bringing this project to fruition, because there is a very real and urgent need in the Memphis community for an expansion of its nursing and biotechnical workforce; and

WHEREAS, Shelby County lacks an estimated 650 nurses and has the highest nursing vacancy in the state; and

WHEREAS, Southwest Tennessee Community College has the highest student pass rate in the state on the NCLEX-RN Exam at 97.4% and a 100% job placement rate for its nursing graduates; these two facts speak volumes about Southwest's capability to produce an adequate number of qualified nurses to address critical workforce shortages; however the school does not currently have the physical capacity to increase its enrollments in this essential program; and

WHEREAS, while currently operating at full capacity in both its day and evening programs, Southwest turns away over 200 qualified students for entry into its nursing program each year; Southwest is also currently unable to award more than \$500,000 in nursing scholarships due to lack of available space for additional nursing students; and

WHEREAS, bioscience industries in the Memphis area employ more than 36,000 workers in 310 establishments, a concentration that is more than 30% higher than the national average; however, a shortage of laboratory technicians and assistants is projected for the area by 2008; and

WHEREAS, Southwest offers the state's first A.A.S. program to train biotechnology technicians in the biomedical and bioscience fields; however, space constraints limited enrollment to 31 students in 2007-2008; and

WHEREAS, the construction of this new 74,000 square foot facility would allow Southwest to increase enrollment of nursing students by 45%, from 275 to 400 students; expand hands-on learning opportunities in its natural sciences laboratories by 25%, serving 250 additional students annually; and increase enrollment in the biotechnology technician A.A.S. degree program to 40 students; and

WHEREAS, the above stated facts adequately demonstrate the present and future shortages of qualified nurses and biotechnology professionals in the greater Memphis area and the corresponding need for the expansion of Southwest's excellent educational programs for these essential professions; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby praise and commend the aforementioned donors for their great generosity and vision in making significant contributions to fund the construction of a new nursing, natural sciences, and biotechnology facility at Southwest Tennessee Community College and urge each of these donors to remain steadfast in his, her or its commitment, both philosophically and financially, to bringing this worthwhile project to fruition for the health and economic prosperity of the greater Memphis and Shelby County community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this General Assembly hereby expresses its unqualified support for this new facility and the provision of state funding for the planning and construction of such facility as soon as possible.